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Austin groups stage peace fast

U.S. policy in Central America target of protest by ex-CIA agent

By David Matustik
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Former CIA agent John Stockwell has returned to an Austin park to make his statement for world peace and against U.S. policies in Central America.

Stockwell, an author and lecturer who now lives in Elgin, is being joined by others from local peace organizations in an Easter Vigil and Fast for World Peace at Pease Park. The fast began at dawn Friday and will last until sunset on Easter at the park just west of Lamar Boulevard and north of 15th Street.

Stockwell staged a similar protest for peace in Austin in April 1984.

Stockwell is a former high-ranking CIA officer who led the agency's covert Angolan Task Force. He resigned from the CIA in 1977, saying he was disillusioned with agency activities.

"We decided to do it again because of the frustration. Our nation has not backed off," Stockwell said. "There is no greatness in the United States brutalizing tiny countries. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that Reagan is orchestrating us into a war."

The vigil is designed to draw attention to what the group perceives as the dangers of the course the United States is taking in nuclear and foreign policy.

Stockwell takes issue with the



Staff Photo by Tom Lankes
Art teacher Kathleen Stockwell places her students' work on a 'peace fence' at Pease Park.

United States supplying aid to rebels fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. President Reagan's bid for \$100 million in aid to the rebels won Senate approval Thursday and goes to the House,

which he rejected the aid plan, for another vote in mid-April.

"What the hell are we doing disrupting the economy of another country and causing people to starve?" Stockwell asked.

Overnight camping is prohibited in Pease Park, so participants are spending the nights in Austin homes.

Participants are drinking only non-nutritious liquids during the fast. Stockwell said it was only a coincidence that the fast began on Good Friday, a day of fasting for many Christians.

Banners and a "peace fence" mark the site of the vigil. The fence displays art work by Metz Elementary School students depicting their conceptions of peace.

The project was an assignment by art teacher Kathleen Stockwell, John Stockwell's daughter.

She, too, is fasting.

The fast "is a show of concern and kind of a cleansing to strengthen ourselves as we continue to resist this war that is being created before our very eyes," Kathleen Stockwell said.

Literature about peace movements and Central America is available at the vigil. Discussions on Central America will take place today, and South African issues will be discussed Sunday.

An Easter service will be held at 1:30 p.m. Sunday.

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